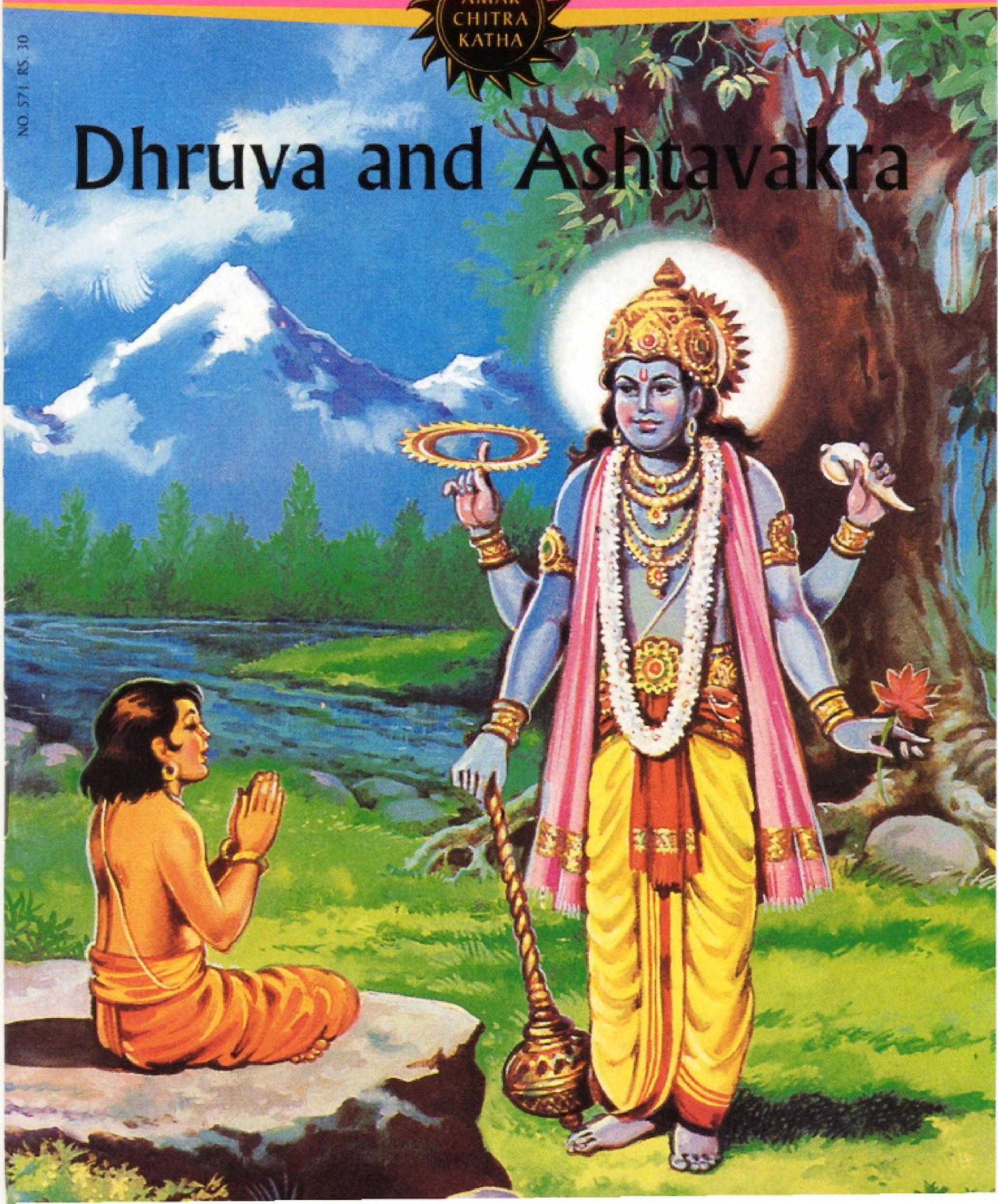


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# Dhruva and Ashtavakra







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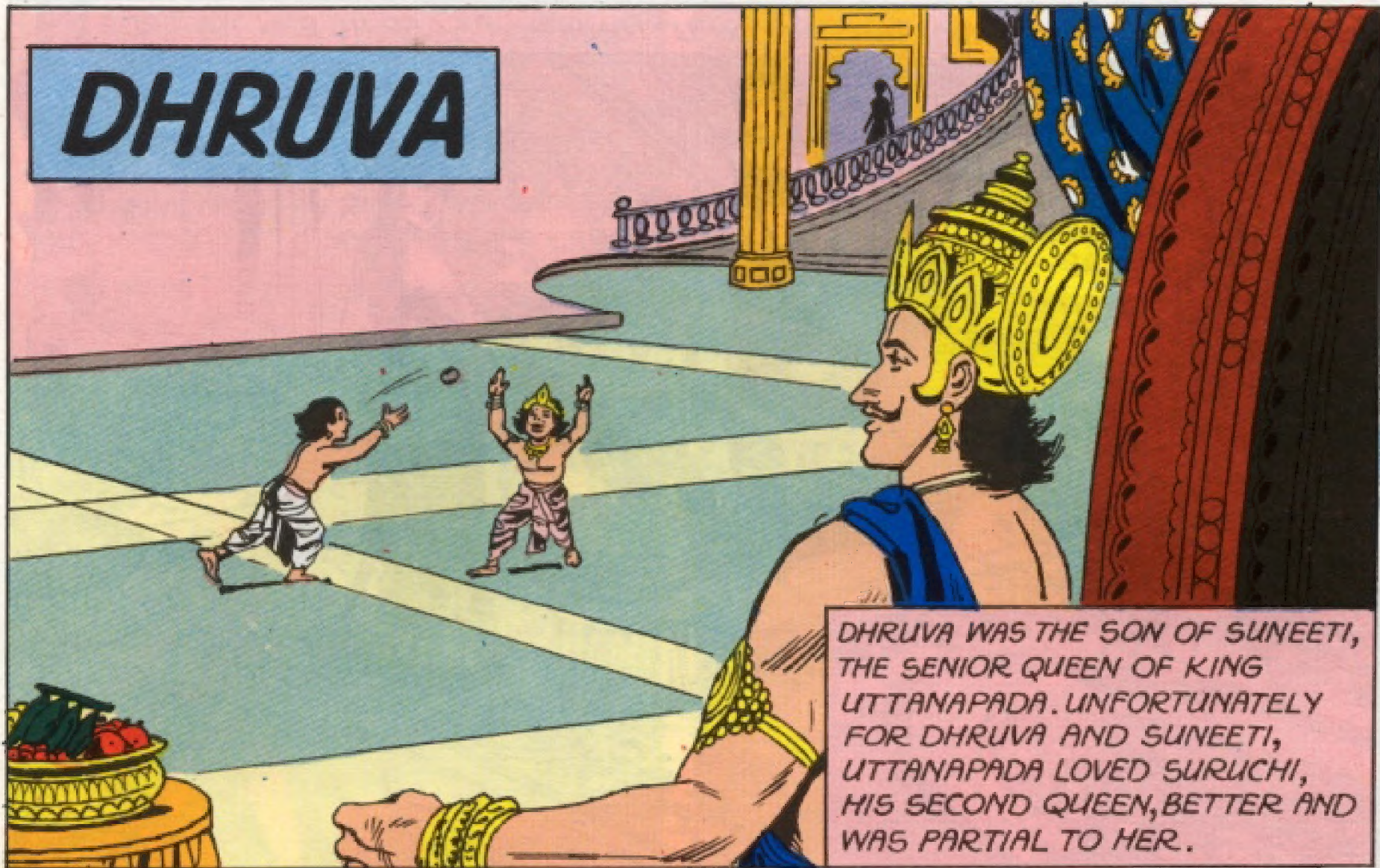
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© India Book House Pvt. Ltd. 1976 Reprinted: June 2006 ISBN: 81-7508-068-X  
Published and Printed by India Book House Pvt Ltd, Mahalaxmi Chambers,  
5th Floor, 22 Bhulabhai Desai Road, Mumbai 400 026, India.



# DHRUVA



DHRUVA WAS THE SON OF SUNEETI, THE SENIOR QUEEN OF KING UTTANAPADA. UNFORTUNATELY FOR DHRUVA AND SUNEETI, UTTANAPADA LOVED SURUCHI, HIS SECOND QUEEN, BETTER AND WAS PARTIAL TO HER.

AH! HERE COMES QUEEN SURUCHI.

HER ONE AIM IS TO SEE HER SON, UTTAMA, CROWNED KING. POOR DHRUVA.



AS SURUCHI WALKED UP TO HER SON—

MOTHER, FATHER IS FREE. MAY I GO AND SIT ON HIS LAP?

CERTAINLY, MY SON. IT IS YOUR RIGHTFUL PLACE AS THE FUTURE KING.





WHEN DHRUVA SAW UTTAMA SITTING ON UTTANAPADA'S LAP, HE RAN TOWARDS THEM.



\* ANOTHER NAME FOR VISHNU.



STUNG BY HER WORDS, DHRUVA RAN CRYING TO HIS MOTHER.

WHY ARE YOU CRYING, DHRUVA? HAS ANYONE HURT YOU?

MOTHER SURUCHI SAID I HAD NO RIGHT TO SIT ON MY FATHER'S LAP.



SHE SAID ONLY UTTAMA HAD THE RIGHT TO SIT ON THE KING'S LAP.

SHE'S RIGHT, DHRUVA.



HOLDING BACK HER TEARS, SUNEETI HUGGED HIM AND CARRIED HIM IN.

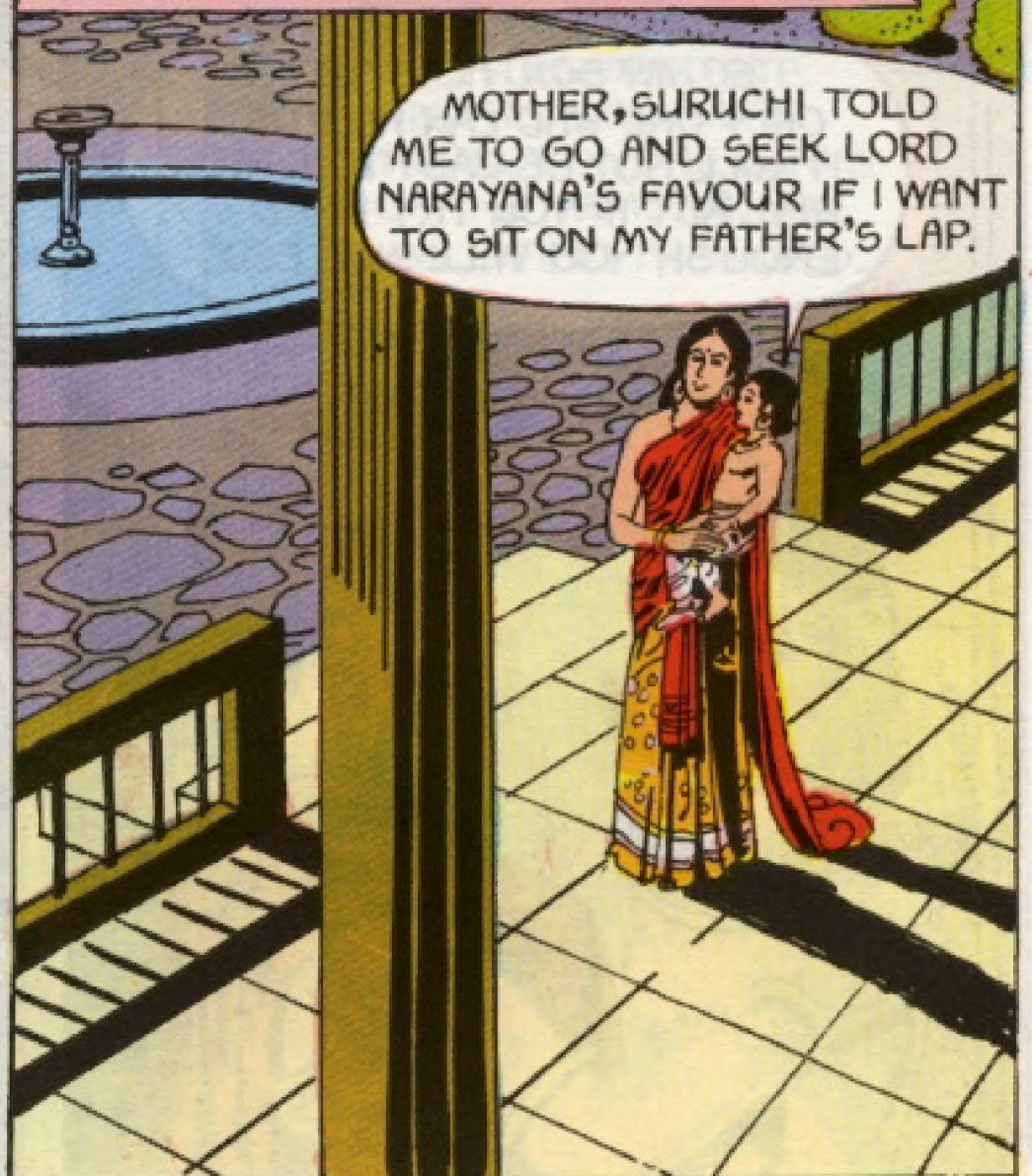
I AM A KSHATRIYA PRINCE, AM I NOT, MOTHER?

YES, MY CHILD.



SECURE IN HIS MOTHER'S ARMS, DHRUVA BECAME CALM AND THOUGHTFUL.

MOTHER, SURUCHI TOLD ME TO GO AND SEEK LORD NARAYANA'S FAVOUR IF I WANT TO SIT ON MY FATHER'S LAP.









MEANWHILE, SAGE NARADA CAME TO KNOW ABOUT SURUCHI'S HARSH WORDS AND DHRUVA'S RESOLVE.

HE IS A TRUE KSHATRIYA INDEED. THOUGH A MERE CHILD, HE WILL NOT BROOK THE INSULTS OF HIS STEP-MOTHER. YET WHAT HE SEEKS IS IMPOSSIBLE. I MUST SPEAK TO HIM.

NARADA WENT TO SEE DHRUVA.

MY CHILD, WHY DON'T YOU ACCEPT YOUR FATE AND GO BACK TO YOUR MOTHER?

O MASTER, I AM DHRUVA, THE SON OF MIGHTY UTTANAPADA, A KSHATRIYA. AND I AM DETERMINED TO WIN THE LORD'S FAVOUR.



I AM AWARE OF THAT, MY CHILD. BUT YOU ARE TOO YOUNG. IT IS NOT EASY TO FIND LORD NARAYANA. WHY DON'T YOU WAIT TILL YOU ARE A LITTLE OLDER?

FORGIVE ME, MASTER, BUT I WILL NOT TURN BACK. O WISE ONE, TELL ME HOW I CAN SUCCEED IN MY RESOLVE.



NARADA WAS EXTREMELY PLEASED BY HIS DETERMINATION.

IF YOU MEDITATE IN THE MADHUVAN FOREST ON THE BANKS OF THE YAMUNA, YOU WILL FIND THE LORD.

O SAINT, TEACH ME HOW TO MEDITATE.



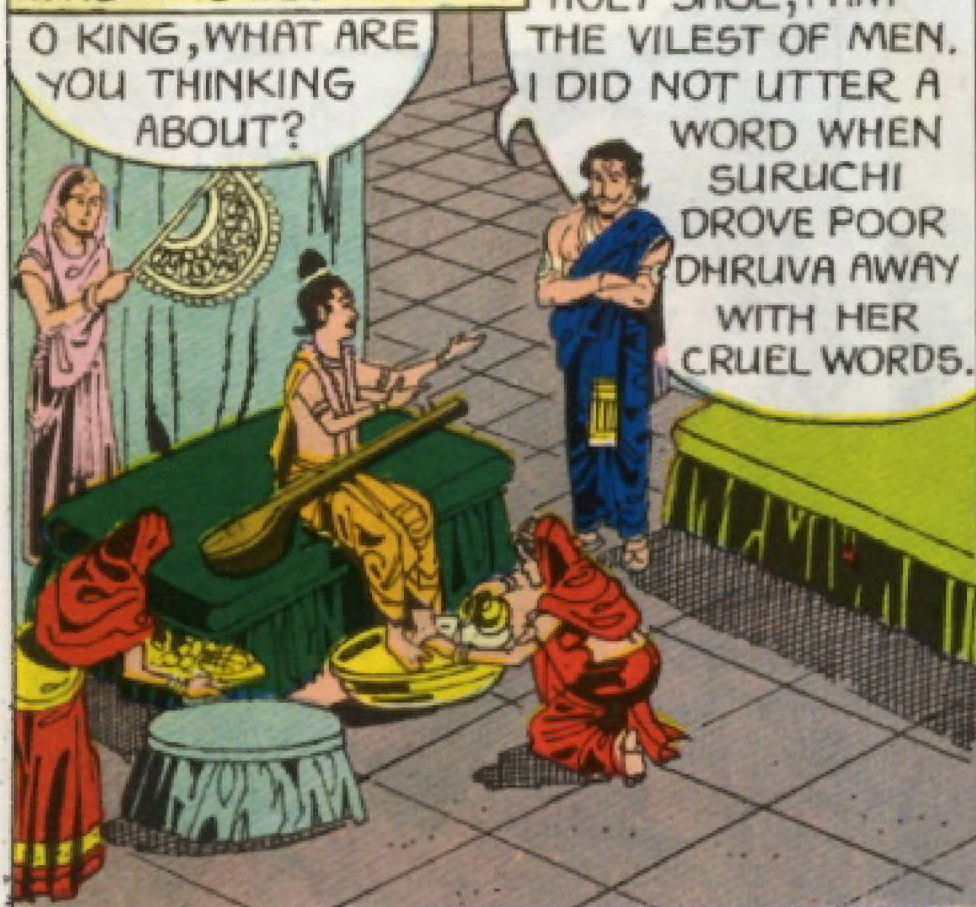




AS DHRUVA SET OUT FOR MADHUVAN,  
NARADA WENT TO THE PALACE OF  
KING UTTANAPADA.



NARADA NOTICED THAT THOUGH UTTANA-  
PADA WELCOMED HIM RESPECTFULLY, HIS  
MIND WAS ELSEWHERE.



ALAS! HE HAS GONE  
AWAY ALONE INTO THE  
FOREST. THE BEASTS  
WILL DEVOUR  
HIM.



\* I BOW TO THE REVERED VASUDEVA (VISHNU).



MEANWHILE, DHRUVA HAD REACHED MADHUVAN.



IN THE FIRST MONTH, HE LIVED ONLY ON THE FRUITS HE COULD FIND IN THE FOREST.



GRADUALLY HE GAVE UP EVEN THAT AND ATE ONLY GRASS AND LEAVES.



IN THE THIRD MONTH, HE STOPPED EATING AND LIVED ONLY ON WATER.





IN THE FOURTH MONTH, HE GAVE UP EVEN THAT AND LIVED ON AIR. THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD HE REPEATED THE MANTRA OVER AND OVER AGAIN.



IN THE FIFTH AND SIXTH MONTHS, HE EVEN STOPPED BREATHING.



DHRUVA'S CONCENTRATION STOPPED THE VERY AIR FROM FLOWING. THERE WAS PANIC IN HEAVEN...









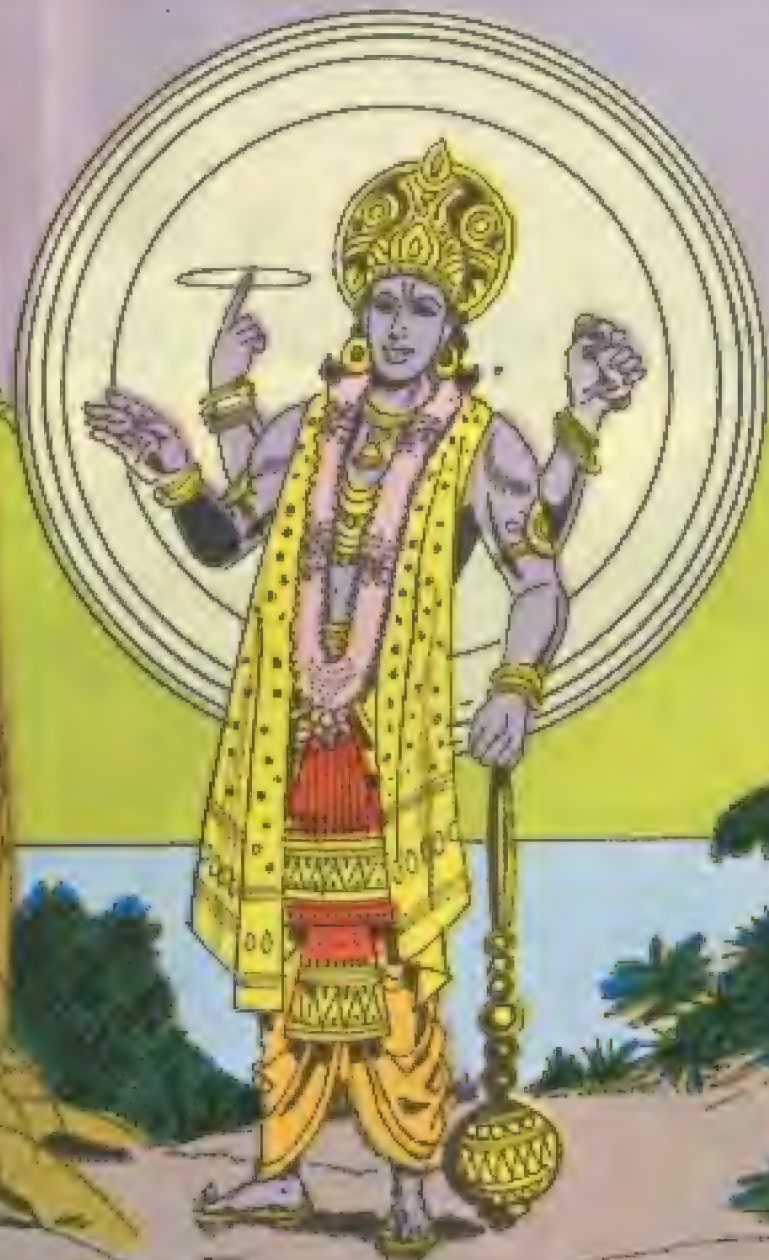
MEANWHILE, AS DHRUVA MEDITATED —

LORD, I THOUGHT  
I HAD FOUND YOU BUT  
YOU'VE SUDDENLY VAN-  
ISHED. HAVE I FAILED IN  
MY WORSHIP? HAVE I  
DISPLEASED YOU? THEN  
I SHALL START MEDI-  
TATING ALL OVER AGAIN.

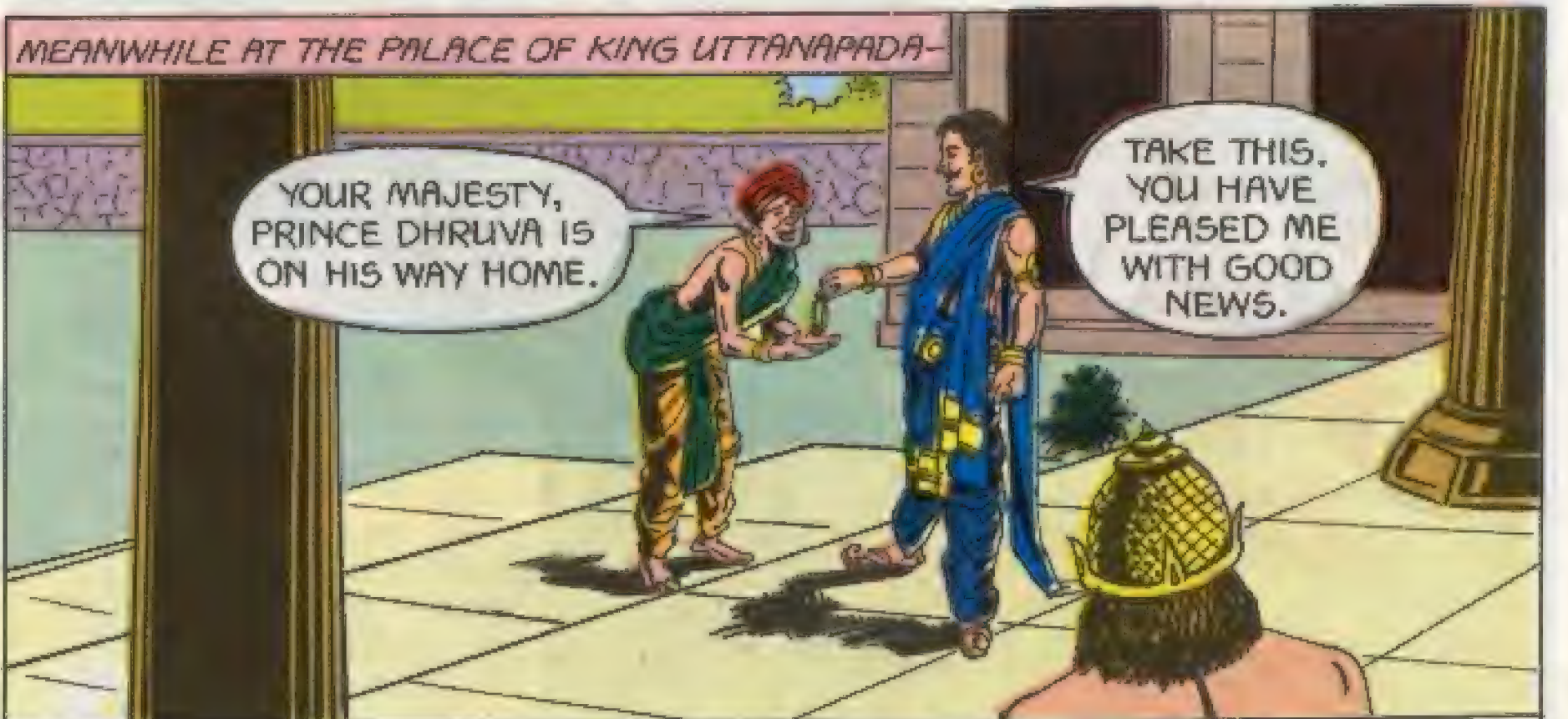


AND DHRUVA OPENED HIS EYES.

THE LORD  
HAS COME  
TO ME!

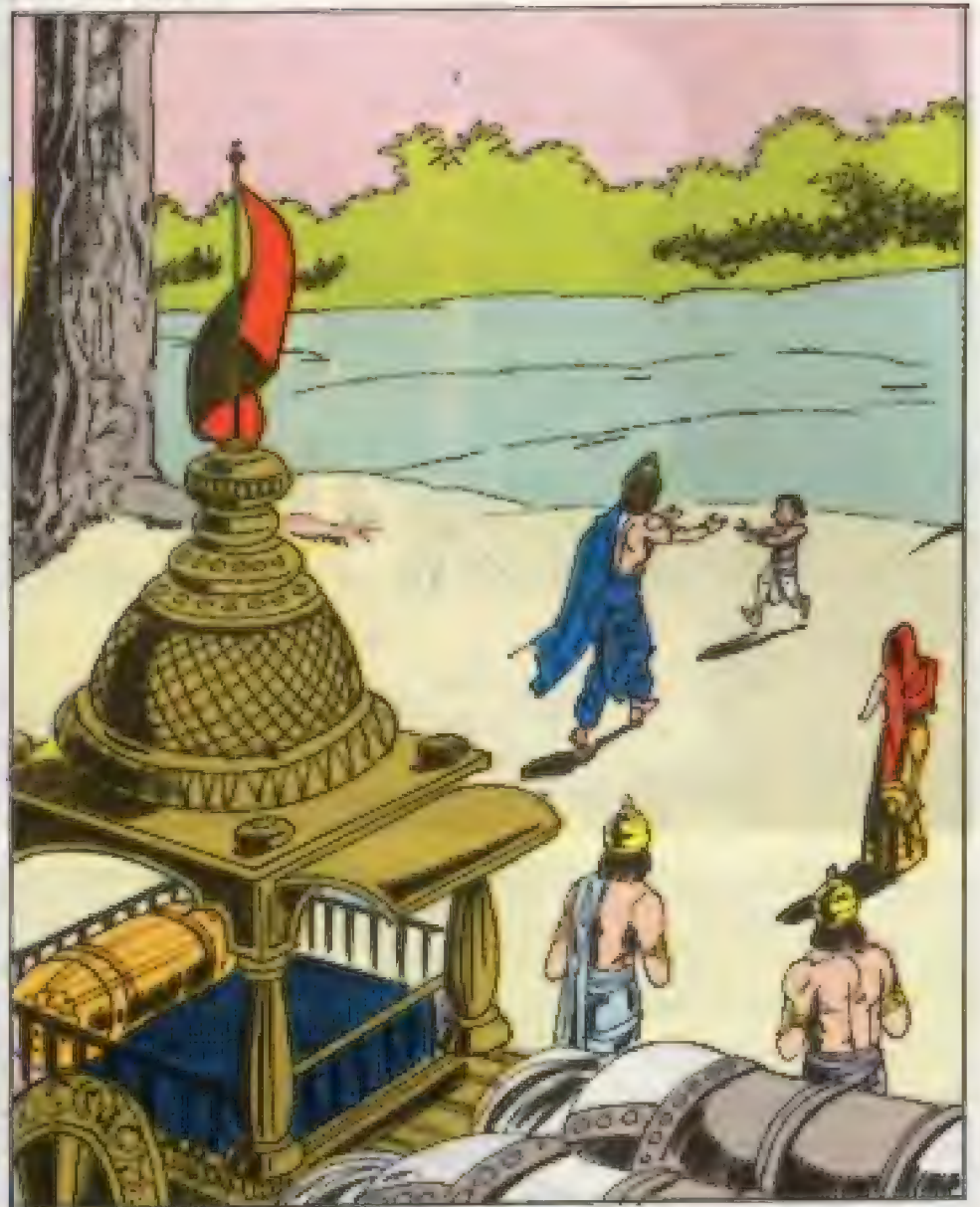






\*THE POLE STAR TO THIS DAY IS KNOWN AS DHRUVA.







# ASHTAVAKRA

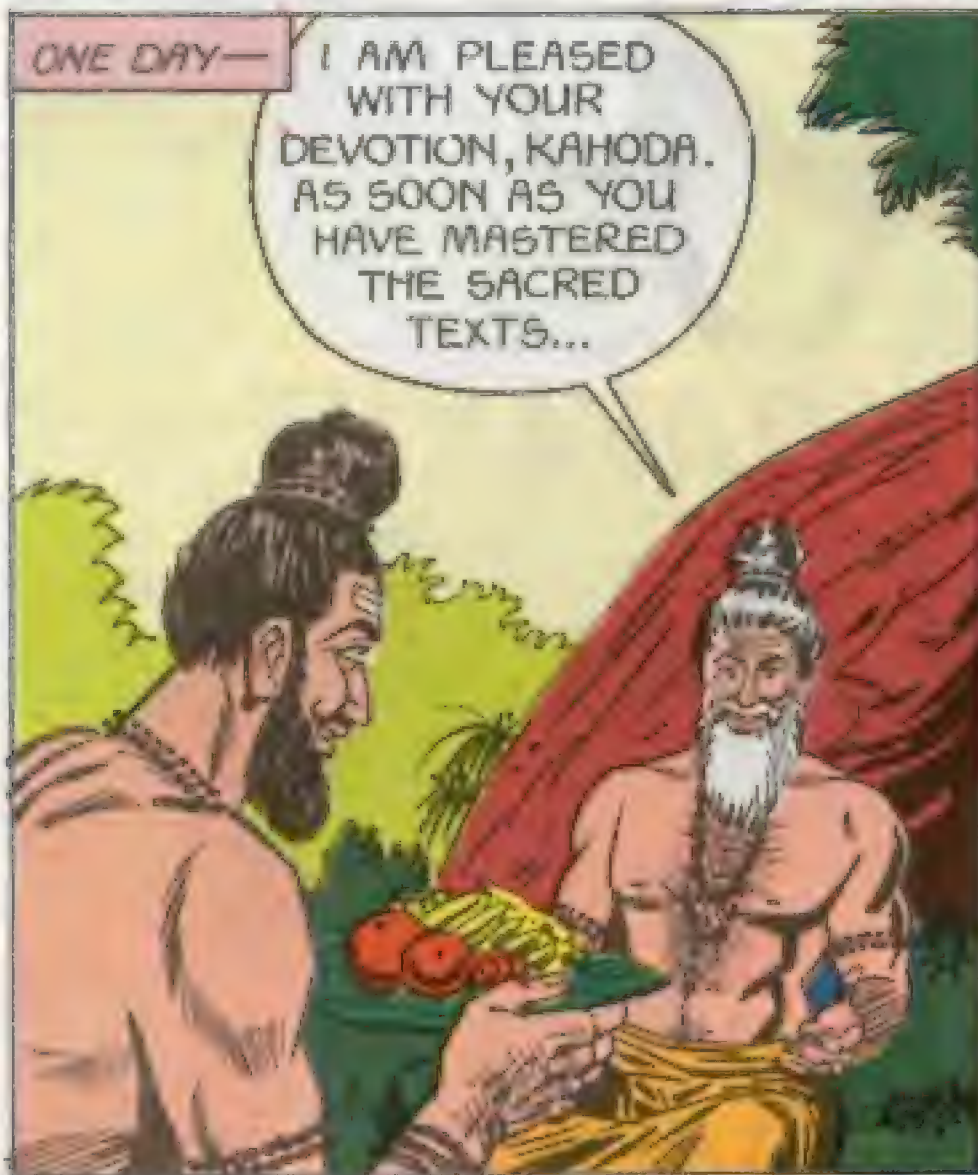


KAHODA WAS THE FAVOURITE DISCIPLE OF UDDALAKA, A RENOWNED SCHOLAR IN THE VEDAS. UDDALAKA HAD A DAUGHTER CALLED SUJATA.



ONE DAY—

I AM PLEASED  
WITH YOUR  
DEVOTION, KAHODA.  
AS SOON AS YOU  
HAVE MASTERED  
THE SACRED  
TEXTS...



...YOU SHALL HAVE  
MY DAUGHTER,  
SUJATA, FOR  
A WIFE



KAHODA WAS CLEVER AND HARD-  
WORKING AND SOON MASTERED THE  
TEXTS. AS HIS GURU HAD PROMISED  
HE WAS MARRIED TO SUJATA.

YOU  
MAY CONTINUE  
TO LIVE HERE AT  
THE ASHRAM,  
AND TEACH YOUR  
DISCIPLES.





THOUGH THEY HAD TO LEAD AN AUSTERE LIFE, KAHODA AND SUJATA WERE HAPPY IN SAGE UDDALAKA'S HERMITAGE.

MY LORD, WHEN WE HAVE A SON, HE MUST MASTER THE SACRED TEXTS AS YOU HAVE.

I SHALL SPARE NO PAINS TO TEACH HIM ALL I KNOW.



A FEW MONTHS LATER, SUJATA BECAME PREGNANT.

I MUST EXPOSE MY CHILD TO THE SACRED INFLUENCE OF THE HYMNS EVEN WHILE HE IS IN THE WOMB.



SO SUJATA SAT BY HER HUSBAND AS HE RECITED VERSES FROM THE SCRIPTURES; AND THE CHILD IN HER WOMB SILENTLY ABSORBED WHAT THE LEARNED FATHER RECITED.



ONE DAY AS KAHODA SAT AMONG HIS DISCIPLES, INSTRUCTING THEM—

THAT'S NOT THE WAY TO CHANT THAT HYMN, FATHER.







WHO WAS THAT?  
WHERE DID THAT  
VOICE COME  
FROM?



IT MUST  
HAVE BEEN  
THE VOICE OF  
OUR UNBORN  
CHILD.

SUCH  
IMPERTI-  
NENCE! AND  
FROM ONE YET  
UNBORN!

FURIOUS WITH HIS SON FOR PUT-  
TING HIM TO SHAME BEFORE HIS  
DISCIPLES, KAHODA CURSED HIM.

O VAIN SOUL! MAY YOU  
BE BORN DEFORMED—  
MAY YOUR BODY BE  
TWISTED IN EIGHT  
PLACES!

THE MONTHS ROLLED ON AND THE  
TIME FOR SUJATA'S CONFINEMENT  
DREW NEAR. ONE DAY—

OUR CHILD WILL  
SOON BE BORN.  
WE WILL NEED  
MONEY TO  
PROVIDE IT  
WITH THE  
COMFORTS  
OF LIFE.

I WILL GO TO  
KING JANAKA OF  
MITHILA. HE IS  
GENEROUS TO  
LEARNED BRAH-  
MANS. BESIDES,  
HE IS AT THE  
MOMENT PER-  
FORMING A  
GRAND YAGNA.





WHEN KAHODA REACHED MITHILA,  
JANAKA WELCOMED HIM.

O REVERED SAGE, YOU  
HAVE COME AT THE  
RIGHT MOMENT.



A SCHOLAR NAMED  
BANDHI HAS COME  
TO MITHILA. NO  
ONE CAN DEFEAT  
HIM IN DEBATE.

LET ME  
TRY,  
O KING.



THINK IT OVER CAREFULLY.  
THOUGH YOU WILL BE  
WELL REWARDED IF  
YOU WIN...



...YOU WILL BE  
DROWNED IN THE  
RIVER IF YOU DON'T.  
AND MANY SCHOLARS  
HAVE LOST THEIR  
LIVES.

I ACCEPT  
THE  
CHALLENGE.





THE DEBATE BEGAN BUT DID NOT CONTINUE FOR LONG.  
KAHODA WAS NO MATCH FOR BANDHI.

BANDHI HAS WON  
AGAIN. POOR KAHODA  
WILL BE DROWNED  
LIKE ALL THE  
OTHERS.



BANDHI WAS TRIUMPHANT.

MY MISSION  
HERE IS PROVING  
TO BE VERY  
SUCCESSFUL.  
I HAVE BEEN  
ABLE TO DISPATCH  
ONE MORE  
SAGE.





BUT JANAKA WAS UNHAPPY.

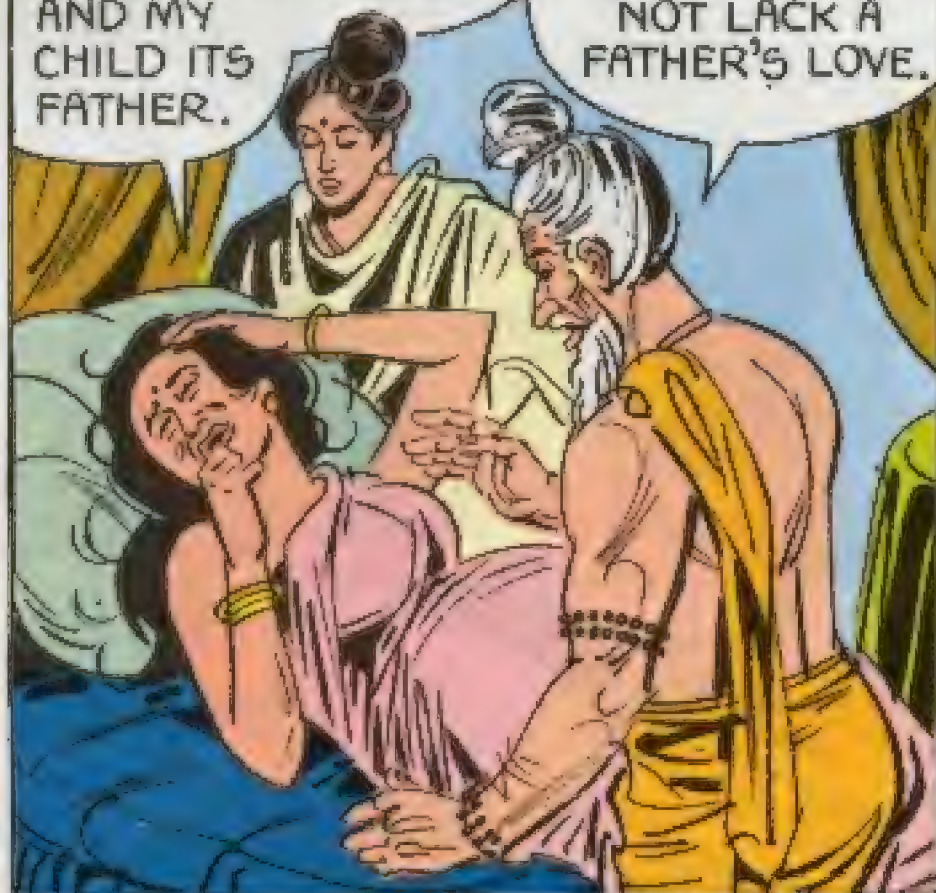
ALAS! I HAVE LOST ONE MORE SAGE WHO CAME TO ATTEND THE YAGNA. HOW WILL THE YAGNA BE A SUCCESS?



WHEN THE NEWS REACHED SUJATA, SHE BROKE DOWN.

ALAS! MY DESIRE FOR WEALTH HAS COST ME MY HUSBAND AND MY CHILD ITS FATHER.

DON'T GRIEVE, SUJATA. YOUR CHILD SHALL NOT LACK A FATHER'S LOVE.



A FEW DAYS LATER SUJATA HAD A BABY.

ALAS! HIS BODY IS DEFORMED IN EIGHT PLACES.

LET HIM BE CALLED ASHTAVAKRA\*. MY WIFE TOO HAS JUST BEEN BLESSED WITH A SON. WE HAVE NAMED HIM SHWETAKETU.



GROWING UP UNDER THE TENDER, LOVING CARE OF UDDALAKA...



\* CROOKED IN EIGHT PLACES.



...ASHTAVAKRA SOON BEGAN TO  
LOOK UPON HIM AS HIS FATHER.



THE YEARS ROLLED ON.  
UDDALAKA TAUGHT ASHTA-  
VAKRA AND SHWETAKETU.



WHEN THE BOYS WERE TWELVE YEARS OLD —

YOU  
HAVE MASTERED  
THE VEDAS. I AM  
PROUD OF YOU,  
MY SON.









AND SUJATA TOLD HIM ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED.

I MUST  
DEFEAT BANDHI  
AND HAVE HIM  
DROWNED.



THAT NIGHT—

COME ON, SHWETAKETU.  
LET US GO TO MITHILA. IT  
WILL BE A GOOD EXPERI-  
ENCE FOR US. KING  
JANAKA HAS NOT BEEN  
ABLE TO COMPLETE THE  
YAGNA HE STARTED  
TWELVE YEARS AGO.



SHWETAKETU WAS WILLING.

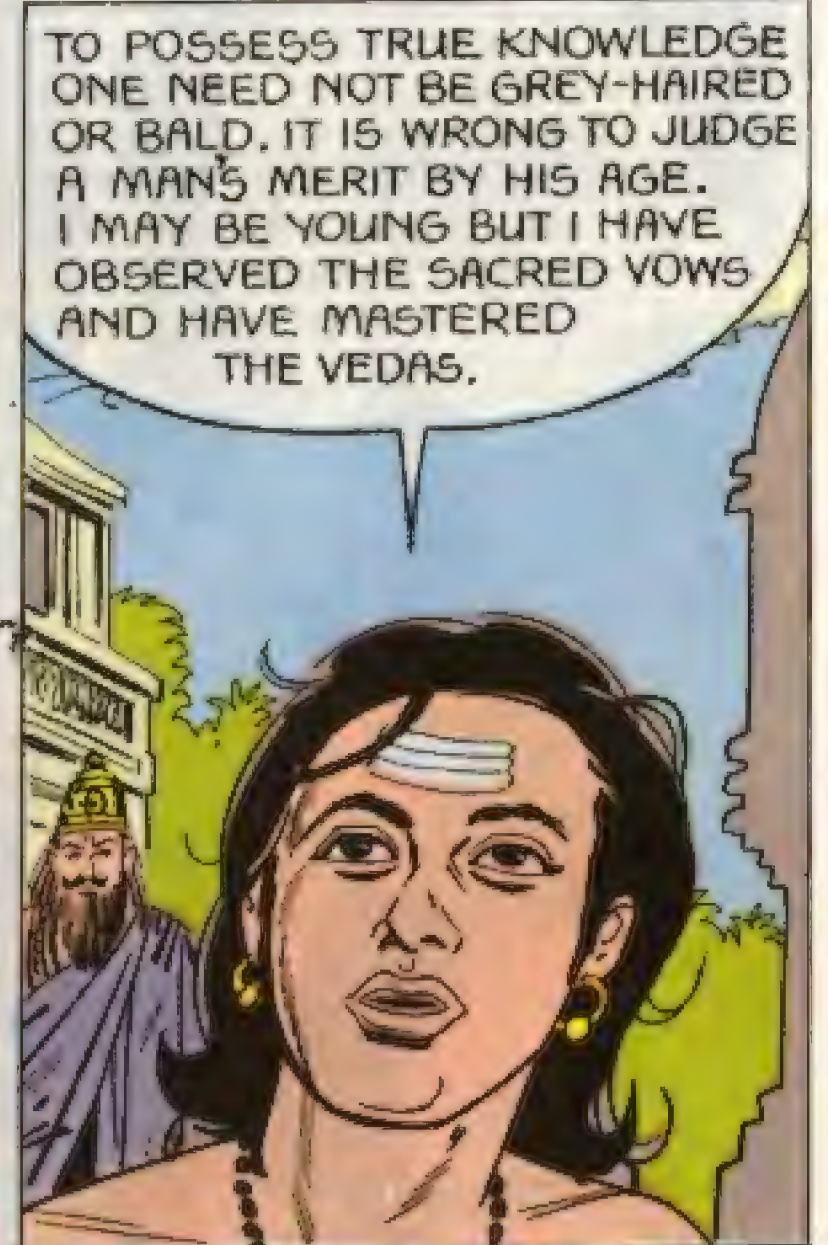
WHEN  
DO YOU  
WANT TO  
LEAVE?

AT  
ONCE.





WHEN THE BOYS REACHED THE GATES OF JANAKA'S PALACE AT MITHILA—



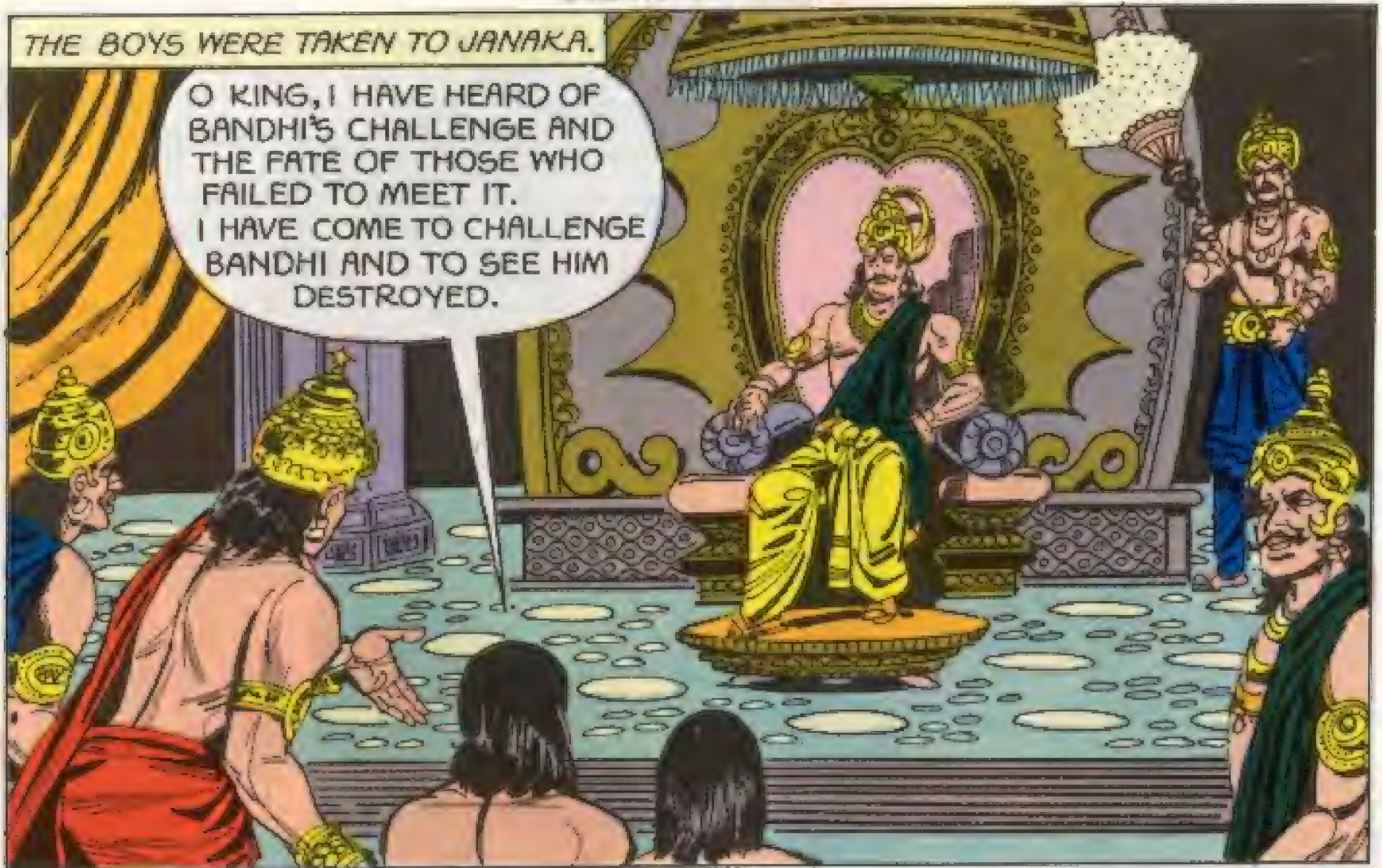






THE BOYS WERE TAKEN TO JANAKA.

O KING, I HAVE HEARD OF BANDHI'S CHALLENGE AND THE FATE OF THOSE WHO FAILED TO MEET IT. I HAVE COME TO CHALLENGE BANDHI AND TO SEE HIM DESTROYED.



JANAKA WAS ASTONISHED.

HE IS JUST A CHILD. IT IS MY DUTY TO WARN HIM.



YOU SPEAK OF DEFEATING BANDHI BECAUSE YOU ARE IGNORANT OF HIS SKILL IN DEBATE. NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO DEFEAT HIM.





THAT'S BECAUSE HE  
WAS NEVER CONFRONTED  
WITH A SCHOLAR OF MY  
CALIBRE. I WILL NOT GO  
BACK TILL I SEE HIM  
DEFEATED AND  
DROWNED.



WHEN JANAKA SAW THAT ASHTAVAKRA  
WAS ADAMANT—

THE BOY IS  
CONFIDENT. I WILL  
TEST HIS  
INTELLIGENCE  
BY ASKING HIM  
A FEW  
QUESTIONS.



IF YOU CAN ANSWER  
MY QUESTIONS I WILL  
LET YOU MEET  
BANDHI.



WHAT IS IT  
THAT DOES  
NOT MOVE  
WHEN BORN?

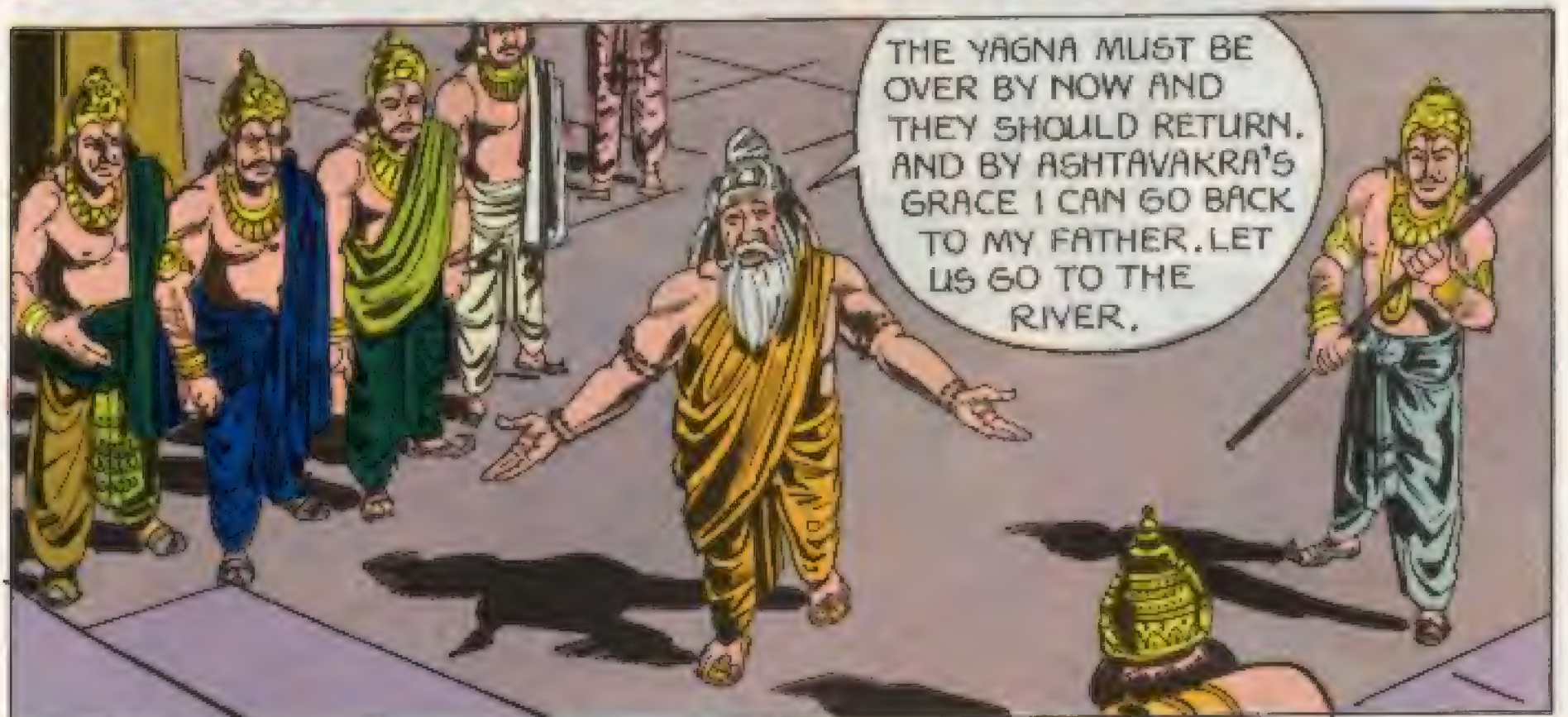
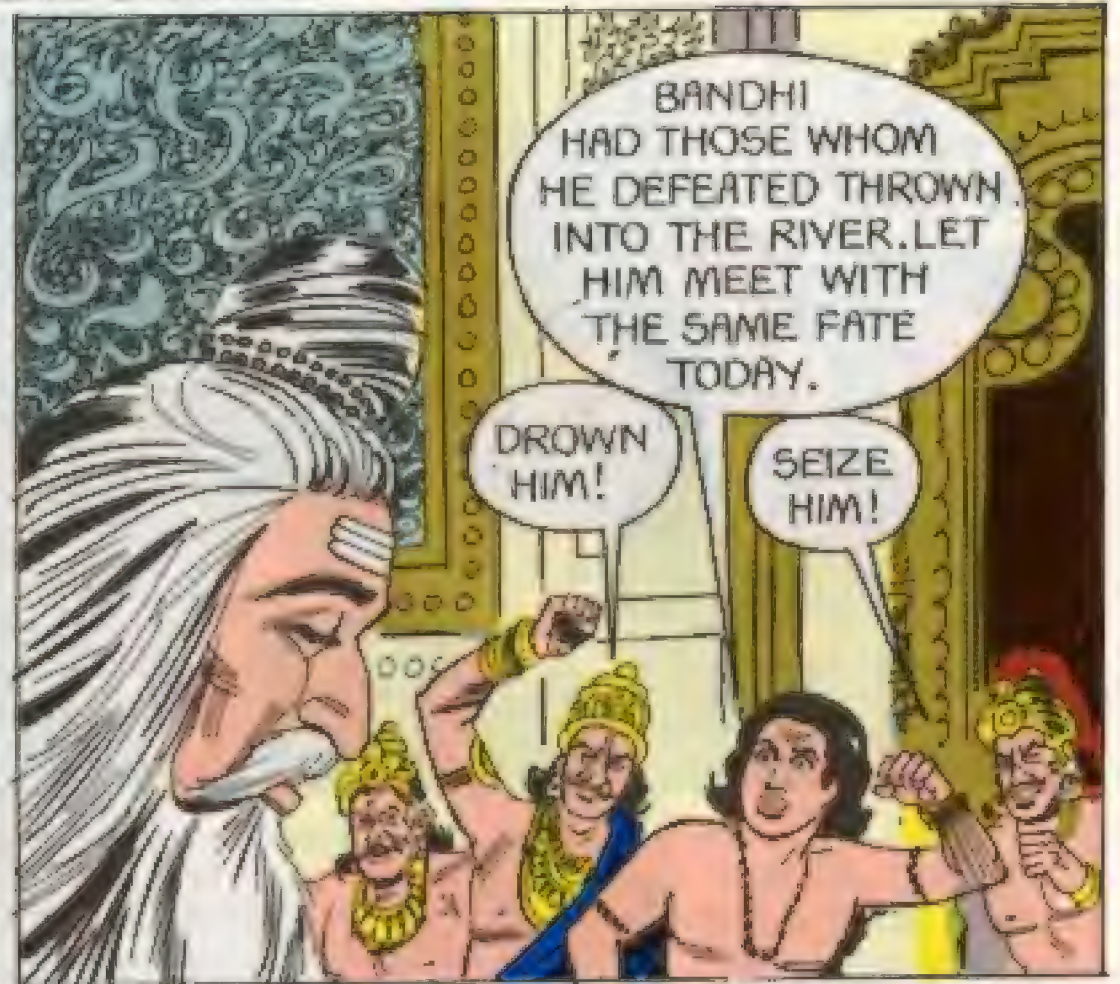
AN EGG.



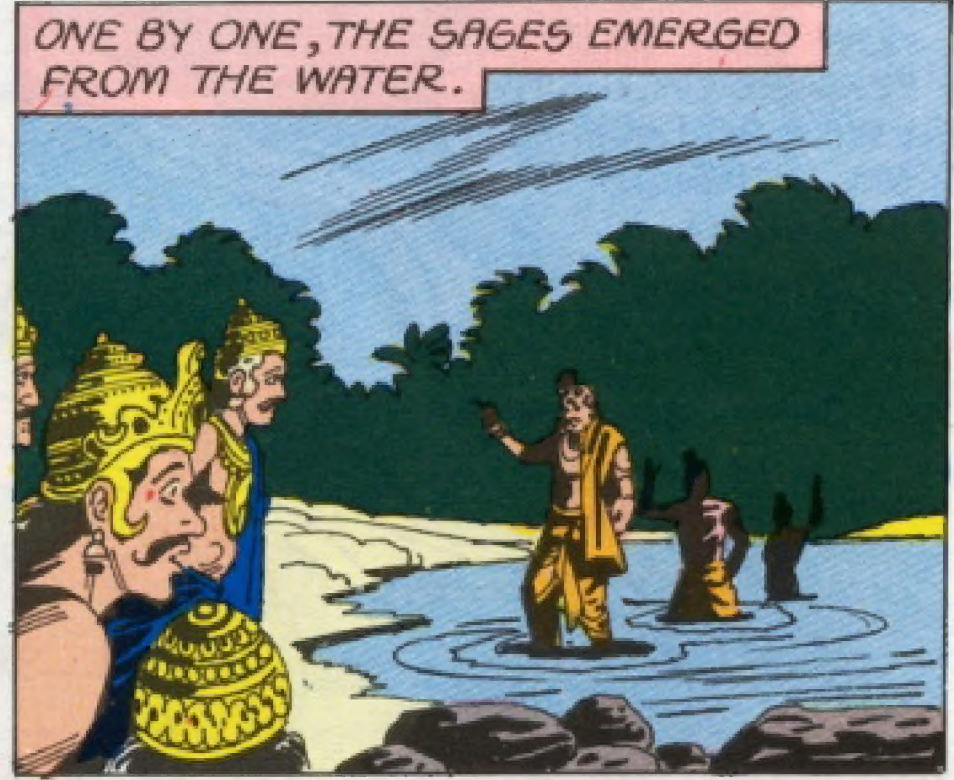
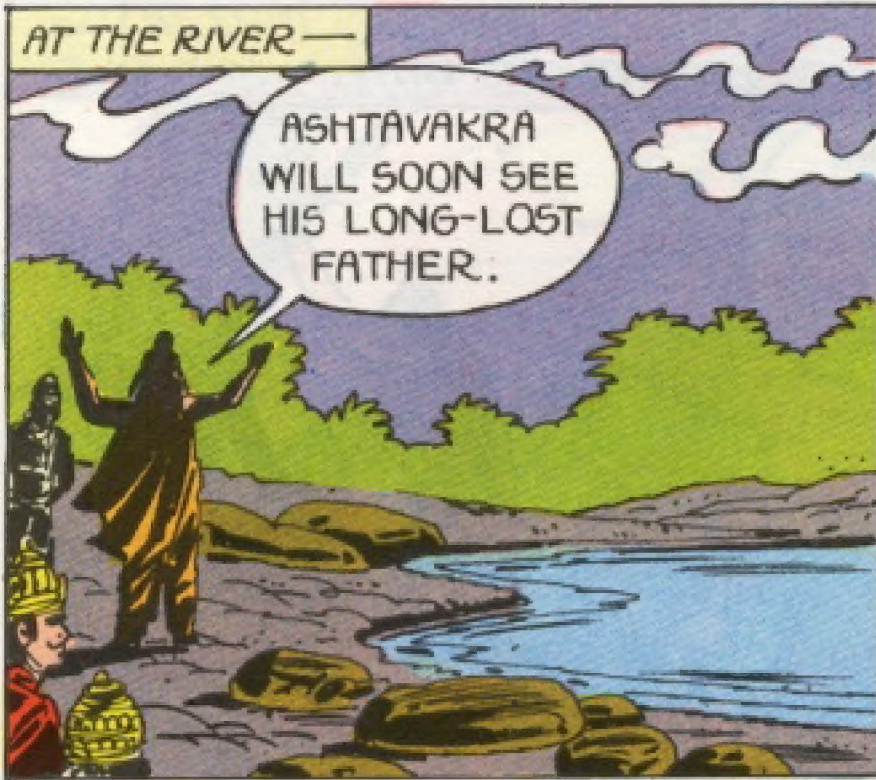














NOW WITH YOUR PERMISSION, O KING, I WILL GO BACK TO MY FATHER'S KINGDOM.



THEN AS THEY WATCHED, BANDHI JUMPED INTO THE WATER...



KAHODA, ASHTAVAKRA AND SHWETAKETU RETURNED TO THE HERMITAGE. AS SOON AS THEY ARRIVED THERE, KAHODA TOOK SUJATA AND ASHTAVAKRA TO THE RIVER FLOWING NEAR BY.

ASHTAVAKRA, TAKE A QUICK PLUNGE INTO THE RIVER AND COME OUT.





ASHTAVAKRA DID AS HE WAS TOLD. A SECOND LATER,  
AS HE EMERGED FROM THE WATER—



THEY WENT TO UDDALAKA.



UDDALAKA REJOICED TO SEE HIS GRANDSON'S BODY STRAIGHT AND TALL. THE  
HERMITAGE ONCE AGAIN BECAME THE HAVEN OF PEACE IT USED TO BE.





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**Editor: Anant Pai**

**Script: Shailaja Ganguly and Malati Shenoy   Illustrations: Ram Waeerkar**

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